

THE BRAILLE MONITOR

INK PRINT EDITION

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND



The National Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the Blind--it is the blind speaking for themselves

N. F. B. Headquarters
2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley 8, Calif.

OCTOBER ISSUE--1957

THE BRAILLE MONITOR

Published monthly in Braille and distributed free to the blind by the American Brotherhood for the Blind, 257 South Spring Street, Los Angeles 12, California.

Ink-print edition produced and distributed by the National Federation of the Blind, 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley 8, California. Subscription rate--\$3.00 per year.

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News items should be addressed to the Editor. Changes of address and subscriptions should be sent to the Berkeley headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind.

October 1957
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CROSS OF BLINDNESS

An Address Delivered by
Professor Jacobus tenBroek
President, National Federation of the Blind
at the Banquet of the Annual Convention
Held in New Orleans, July 6, 1957

In the short seventeen years since our founding of the National Federation of the Blind, we have grown from a handful of men and women scattered over seven States to a Federation of forty-three State affiliates. The first Convention of the NFB in 1940 was attended by twelve or fifteen persons--our Convention last year had a registration of seven hundred five from every corner of the Union.

That is rapid organizational growth by any yardstick. Who are these people of the National Federation of the Blind? What is the purpose that has led them to self-organization in such numbers, and unites them now with such apparent dedication and enthusiasm?

It is not enough, I think, to answer that the members of the NFB are drawn together by their common interest in the welfare of the blind; for many of the sighted share that, too. Nor is it sufficient to say that we are united only because we are blind; many who are affiliated with agencies for the blind have that characteristic also. It is fundamental to the uniqueness of our group that we are the only nation-wide organization *for* the blind which is also *of* the blind. The composition of the NFB, indeed, is living testimony to the fact--unfortunately not yet accepted by society as a whole--that the blind are capable of self-organization: which is to say, of leading themselves, of directing their own destiny.

Yet this is still only half the truth, only a part of the characteristic which defines our Federation and provides its reason for being. Our real distinction from other organizations in the field of blind welfare lies in the social precept and personal conviction which are the motive source of our activity and the wellspring of our faith. The belief that we who are blind are normal human beings sets us sharply apart from other groups designed to aid the blind. We have all the typical and ordinary range of talents and techniques, attitudes and aspirations. Our underlying assumption is not--as it is with some other groups--the intrinsic helplessness and everlasting dependency of those who happen to lack sight, but rather their innate capacity to nullify and overrule this disability--to find their place in the community--with much the same degree of success and failure to be found among the general population.

Perhaps I can best document this thesis of the normality of the blind with a random sample of the occupations represented at our national Convention a year ago in San Francisco. Among the blind delegates in attendance, there were: three blind physicists engaged in experimental work for the United States Government. There was one blind chemist also doing experimental work for the national government. There were two university instructors of the rank of full professor, a number of other college instructors of

various ranks, and several blind teachers of sighted students in primary and secondary grades in the public schools. There were thirteen lawyers, most in private practice, two employed as attorneys by the United States Government, one serving as the chairman of a State public service commission, one serving as a clerk to a State chief justice. There were three chiropractors, one osteopath, ten secretaries, seventeen factory workers, one shoemaker, one cab dispatcher, one bookmender, one appliance repairman, four telephone switchboard operators, numerous businessmen in various businesses, five musicians, thirty students, many directors and workers in programs for the blind, and sixty-one housewives.

At any other Convention there would be nothing at all remarkable about this broad cross-section of achievement and ability; it is exactly what you would expect to find at a gathering of the American Legion or the Exalted Order of Elks, or at a town meeting in your community. Anywhere else, that is, but at a convention of the blind. It never ceases to surprise the public that a blind man may be able to hold his own in business, operate a farm successfully, argue a brief in a court of law, teach a class of sighted students, or conduct experiments in a chemistry lab. It comes as a shock to the average person to discover that the blind not only can but *do* perform as well as the next man in all the normal and varied callings of the community.

But this "shock of recognition," on the part of many people, too easily gives way to a mood of satisfaction and an attitude of complacency. After all, if the blind are so capable, so successful and so independent what is all the fuss about? Where is the need for all this organization and militant activity? Why can't the blind let well enough alone?

These are reasonable questions, surely, and deserve a reasoned answer. I believe that the answer may best be given by reciting a list of sixteen specific events which have taken place recently in various parts of the country. The events are:

1. A blind man (incidentally a distinguished educator and citizen of his community) was denied a room in a well-known YMCA in New York City--*not* on the ground that his appearance betokened inability to pay, which it did not; *not* on the ground that he had an unsavory reputation, which he did not; *not* on the ground that his behavior was or was likely to be disorderly, which it was not--but on the ground that he was blind.

2. A blind man was rejected as a donor by the blood bank in his city--*not* on the ground that his blood was not red; *not* on the ground that his blood was watery, defective in corpuscles or diseased; *not* on the ground that he would be physically harmed by the loss of the blood--but on the ground that he was blind.

3. A blind man (in this case a successful lawyer with an established reputation in his community) was denied the rental of a safety-deposit box by his bank--*not* on the ground that he was a well-known bank robber; *not* on the ground that he had nothing to put in it; *not* on the ground that he couldn't pay the rental price--but on the ground that he was blind.

4. A blind man was rejected for jury duty in a California city--*not* on the ground of mental incompetence; *not* on the ground of moral irresponsibility; *not* on the ground that he would not weigh the evidence impartially and come to a just verdict--but on the ground that he was blind.

5. A blind college student majoring in education was denied permission to perform practice teaching by a State university--*not* on the ground that her academic record was poor; *not* on the ground that she had not satisfied the prerequisites; *not* on the ground that she lacked the educational or personal qualifications--but on the ground that she was blind.

6. A blind applicant for public employment was denied consideration by a State Civil Service Commission--*not* on the ground that he lacked the education or experience specifications; *not* on the ground that he was not of good moral character; *not* on the ground that he lacked the residence or citizenship requirements--but on the ground that he was blind.

7. A blind woman was refused a plane ticket by an airline--*not* on the ground that she couldn't pay for her ticket; *not* on the ground that her heart was weak and couldn't stand the excitement; *not* on the ground that she was a carrier of contagion--but on the ground that she was blind.

8. A blind machinist was declared ineligible for a position he had already held for five years. This declaration was the result of a routine medical examination. It came on the heels of his complete clearance and reinstatement on the job following a similar medical finding the year before. These determinations were made--*not* on the ground of new medical evidence showing that he was blind, for that was known all along; *not* on the ground that he could not do the job which he had successfully performed for five years with high ratings; *not* on the ground of any factor related to his employment--they were made on the ground that he was blind.

9. A blind high school student who was a duly qualified candidate for student body president was removed from the list of candidates by authority of the principal and faculty of the school--*not* on the ground that he was an outside infiltrator from some other school; *not* on the ground that he was on probation; *not* on the ground that he was not loyal to the principles of the United States Constitution--but on the ground that he was blind.

10. Traveler's Insurance Company, in its standard policy issued to cover trips on railroads, expressly exempts the blind from coverage--*not* on the ground that there is statistical or actuarial evidence that blind travelers are more prone to accident than sighted travelers are; *not* on the ground that suitcases or fellow passengers fall on them more often; *not* on the ground that trains carrying blind passengers are more likely to be wrecked unless it is the engineer who is blind--but solely on the ground of blindness. Many, if not most, other insurance companies selling other forms of insurance either will not cover the blind or increase the premium.

11. A blind man, who had been a successful justice court and police court judge in his community for eleven years, ran for the position of superior court judge in the general election of 1956. During the campaign his opponents did not argue that he was ignorant of the law and therefore incompetent; or that he had been guilty of bilking widows and orphans; or that he lacked the quality of mercy. Almost the only argument that they used against him was that he was blind. The voters, however, elected him handily. At the next session of the state legislature a bill was introduced disqualifying blind persons as judges. The organized blind of the State were able to modify this bill but not to defeat it.

12. More than sixty blind men and women--among them doctors, teachers, businessmen and members of various professions--were recently ordered by the building and safety authority of a large city to move out of their hotel-type living quarters. This was *not* on the ground that they were pyromaniacs and likely to start fires; *not* on the ground that they were delinquent in their rent; *not* on the ground that they disturbed their neighbors with riotous living--but on the ground that as blind people they were subject to the code provisions regarding the "bed-ridden, ambulatory and helpless;" that anyone who is legally blind must live in an institution-type building--with all the rooms on the ground floor, with no stairs at the end of halls, with hard, fire-proof furniture, with chairs and smoking-stands lined up along the wall "so they won't fall over them."

13. The Education Code of one of our States provides that deaf, dumb, and blind children may be sent at State expense to a school for the deaf, dumb, or blind, if they possess the following qualifications: (1) They are free from offensive or contagious diseases; (2) they have no parent, relative, guardian or nearest friend able to pay for their education; (3) that by reason of deafness, dumbness or blindness, they are disqualified from being taught by the ordinary process of instruction or education.

14. In a recent opinion the supreme court of one of the States held that a blind person who sought compensation for an injury due to an accident which he claimed arose out of and in the course of his employment by the State board of industries for the blind, was a ward of the State and therefore not entitled to compensation. The conception that blind shopworkers are wards of the State was only overcome in another State by a recent legislative enactment.

15. A blind person, duly convicted of a felony and sentenced to a State penitentiary, was denied parole when he became eligible therefore--*not* on the ground that he had not served the required time; *not* on the ground that his prison behavior had been bad; *not* on the ground that he had not been rehabilitated--but on the ground that he was blind.

16. A blind man who sat down at a gambling table in Reno, where such things are legal, was denied an opportunity to play--*not* on the ground that he didn't know the rules of the game; *not* on the ground that he might cheat the dealer or the other players; *not* on the ground that he didn't have any money to lose--but on the ground that he was blind.

These last two cases show that the blind are normal in every respect.

What emerges from this set of events, is the age-old stereotype of blindness as witlessness and helplessness. By virtue of this pervasive impression, a blind man is held to be incapable of weighing the evidence presented at a trial or performing the duties of a teacher. He cannot take care of himself in a room of his own, and is not to be trusted on a plane. A sightless person would not know what he has put into or removed from a safety-deposit box; and he has no right to employment in the public service. He must not even be permitted to continue on a job he has performed successfully for years. Even his blood cannot be given voluntarily for the common cause.

Contrast these two lists--the one of the occupations represented at the NFB Convention; the other of the discriminatory activities--the first is a list of accomplishments of what the blind have done and therefore can do; the second is a list of prohibitions of what the blind are thought incompetent to do and therefore are debarred from attempting. The first list refers to the physical disability of blindness. It demonstrates in graphic fashion how slight a disadvantage is the mere loss of sight to the mental capacity and vocational talent of the individual. The second list refers not to the disability but to the *handicap* which is imposed upon the blind by others. The origin of the disability is plainly inside the blind person. The origin and responsibility for the handicap are just as plainly outside him--in the attitudes and preconceptions of the community.

Let me be very clear about this. I have no wish to minimize the character and extent of blindness as a disability. It is for all of us a constant nuisance and a serious inconvenience. To overcome it requires effort and patience and initiative and guts. It is not compensated for, despite the fairy-tales to the contrary, by the spontaneous emergence of a miraculous "sixth sense" or any other magical powers. It means nothing more or less than the loss of one of the five senses and a correspondingly greater reliance upon the four that remain--as well as upon the brain, the heart, and the spirit.

It may be said that the discriminatory acts which I have cited, and others like them which are occurring all the time, simply do not reflect informed thought. They are occasional happenings, unpremeditated, irrational or accidental. Surely no one would justify them; no one would say that they represent an accurate appraisal of the blind and of blindness.

Well, let us see. Let us look at some pronouncements of presumably thoughtful and informed persons writing about the blind--agency heads, educators, administrators, social workers, historians, psychologists, and public officials. What do they have to say about the potentialities of the blind in terms of intellectual capacity, vocational talent, and psychological condition? What do they report concerning the prospects for social integration on the basis of normality and economic advancement on the basis of talent?

First, an educator. Here are the words of a prominent authority on the education of the blind, himself for thirty years a superintendent of a school for the blind. "It is wrong to start with the school," this authority writes, "and to teach there a number of occupations that the blind can do, but to teach them out of relation to their practical and relative values.

This is equivalent to attempting to create trades for the blind and then more or less angrily to demand that the world recognize the work and buy the product, whether useful or useless." More than this, it is necessary to recognize the unfitness of the blind "as a class" for any sort of competition and therefore to afford them not only protection but monopoly wherever possible. Declaring that "it must be unqualifiedly conceded that there is little in an industrial way that a blindperson can do at all that cannot be done better and more expeditiously by people with sight," this expert considers that there are only two ways out: one being the extension of concessions and monopolies, and the other the designation of certain "preferred" occupations for the blind—"leaving the battle of wits only to those select few that may be considered, and determined to be, specially fit."

The conclusion that employment possibilities for the blind are confined, with only negligible exceptions, to the purview of sheltered workshops is contained in this set of "facts" about the blind which the same authority asserts are "generally conceded by those who have given the subject much thought:" "... that the handcrafts in which the blind can do first-class work are very limited in number, with basketry, weaving, knitting, broom--and brush--making, and chair-caning as the most promising and most thoroughly tried out.... that in these crafts the blind cannot enter into direct competition with the seeing either in the quality of product or the amount turned out in a given time.... that the crafts pursued by the blind may best be carried on in special workshops under the charge of government officials or trained officers of certain benevolent associations... that among the 'higher' callings piano-tuning and massage are, under favoring conditions such as prevail for masseurs in Japan, the fields offering the greatest chance of success, while the learned professions, including teaching, are on the whole only for those of very superior talent and, more particularly, very superior courage and determination to win at all costs."

Second, an historian. The basis for this assessment, and its justification, have been presented in blunt and explicit language by a well-known historian of blindness and the blind in the United States. He says, "... there exists in the community a body of men who, by reason of a physical defect, namely, the loss of sight, are disqualified from engaging in the regular pursuits of men and who are thus largely rendered incapable of providing for themselves independently." They are to be regarded as a "disabled and infirm fraction of the people" or, more specifically, as "sighted men in a dark room." "Rather than let them drift into absolute dependence and become a distinct burden, society is to lend an appropriate helping hand" through the creation of sheltered, publicly subsidized employment.

Third, administrators. That this pessimistic appraisal of the range of talent among the blind has not been limited to the schoolmen and historians may be shown by two succinct statements from wartime pamphlets produced by the Civil Service Commission in an effort to broaden employment opportunities for the physically disabled. "The blind", it was found, "are especially proficient in manual occupations requiring a delicate sense of touch. They are well suited to jobs which are repetitious in nature." Again: "The placement of persons who are blind presents various special problems. Small groups of positions in sheltered environment, involving repetitive work, were surveyed in government

establishments and were found to have placement potentialities for the blind." Such findings as these were doubtless at the base of a remark of a certain public official who wrote that: "Helping the blind has its strong appeal to the sensibilities of everyone; on the other hand, we should avoid making the public service an eleemosynary institution."

Fourth, a blind agency head. The executive director of one of the largest private agencies for the blind justifies the failure of the philanthropic groups in these blunt terms: "The fact that so few workers or organizations are doing anything appreciable to [improve the condition of the blind] cannot be explained entirely on the grounds that they are not in the vanguard of social thinking. It is rather because they are realistic enough to recognize that the rank and file of blind people have neither the exceptional urge for independence nor the personal qualifications necessary to satisfactory adjustment in the sighted world. . . . It is very difficult and exceptional for a blind person to be as productive as a sighted person."

Fifth, a psychologist. Even plainer language--as well as more impressive jargon--has been used by another authority who is widely considered the pre-eminent expert in the field of blind psychology. "Until recently," he writes, "the blind and those interested in them have insisted that society revise and modify its attitude toward this specific group. Obviously, for many reasons, this is an impossibility, and effort spent on such a program is as futile as spitting into the wind. . . . it is extremely doubtful whether the degree of emotional maturity and social adaptability of the blind would long support and sustain any social change of attitude, if it were possible to achieve it." If this is not plain enough, the writer continues: "A further confusion of attitude is found in educators and workers for the blind who try to propagandize society with the rational concept that the blind are normal individuals without vision. This desperate whistling in the dark does more damage than good. The blind perceive it as a hypocritical distortion of their true state, and society discovers it to be a misrepresentation of actual facts. . . . It is dodging the issue to place the responsibility on the unbelieving and nonreceptive popular attitudes. . . . The only true answer lies in the unfortunate circumstance that the blind share with other neurotics the nonaggressive personality and the inability to participate fully in society. . . . There are two general directions for attacking such a problem, either to adjust the individual to his environment, or to rearrange the environment so that it ceases to be a difficulty to the individual. It is quite obvious that the latter program is not only inadvisable, but also impossible. However, it is the attack that nearly every frustrated, maladjusted person futilely attempts."

Sixth, a social worker. This sweeping negation of all attempts to modify the prejudicial attitudes of society toward the blind, however eccentric and extreme it may sound, finds strong support in the field of social casework. In areas where "such ideas remain steadfast," reads a typical report, "it is the function of the social caseworker to assist the blind person to work within these preconceived ideas. Since handicapped persons are a minority group in society, there is greater possibility of bringing about a change in an individual within a stated length of time than there is in reversing accepted concepts within the culture." The "well-adjusted blind person," it is argued, should be able to get along in this restrictive social setting, and the case worker must concentrate on his personal adjustment since it is easier to

reform the client than to reform society.

Seventh, a blind philanthropist. Let me close my list of testimonials with one final citation. I think it must already be sufficiently obvious that, granting the assumptions contained in all these statements, the blind have no business organizing themselves apart from sighted supervision; that a social movement of the blind and by the blind is doomed to futility, frustration, and failure. But just in case the point is not clear enough, I offer the considered opinion of a well-known figure in the history of blind philanthropy:

It cannot, then, be through the all-blind society that the blind leader of the blind finds adequate opportunity for the exercise of his leadership. The wise leader will know that the best interests of each blind person lie within the keeping of the nine hundred ninety-nine sighted people who, with himself, make up each one thousand of any average population. He will know, further, that if he wishes to promote the interests of the blind, he must become a leader of the sighted upon whose understanding and patronage the fulfilment of these interests depends. . . . There is . . . no advantage accruing from membership in an all-blind organization which might not be acquired in greater measure through membership in a society of sighted people.

What is the substance of all these damning commentaries? What are the common assumptions which underlie the attitudes of the leaders of blind philanthropy and the authorities on blind welfare? The fundamental concepts can, I think, be simply stated. First, the blind are by virtue of their defect emotionally immature if not psychologically abnormal; they are mentally inferior and narrowly circumscribed in the range of their ability—and therefore inevitably doomed to vocational monotony, economic dependency, and social isolation. Second, even if their capabilities were different they are necessarily bound to the fixed status and subordinate role ordained by "society", whose attitudes toward them are permanent and unalterable. Third, they must place their faith and trust, not in themselves and in their own organizations, but in the sighted public and most particularly in those who have appointed themselves the protectors and custodians of the blind.

A few simple observations are in order. First, as to the immutability of social attitudes and discriminatory actions towards the blind, we know from intimate experience that the sighted public wishes well of the blind and that its misconceptions are rather the result of innocence and superstition than of deliberate cruelty and malice aforesought. There was a time, in the days of Rome, when blind infants were thrown to the wolves or sold into slavery. That time is no more. There was a time, in the middle ages, when blind beggars were the butts of amusement at country fairs, decked out in paper spectacles and donkeys' ears. That time is no more. There was a time, which still exists to a surprising extent, when the parents of a blind child regarded his disability as a divine judgment upon their own sins. But that time is now beginning to disappear at least in the civilized world.

The blind are no longer greeted by society with open hostility and frantic avoidance,

but with compassion and sympathy. It is true that an open heart is no guarantee of an open mind. It is true that good intentions are not enough. It is true that tolerance is a far cry from brotherhood, and that protection and trusteeship are not the synonyms of equality and freedom. But the remarkable progress already made in the civilizing of brute impulses and the humanizing of social attitudes towards the blind is compelling evidence that there is nothing fixed or immutable about the social status quo for the blind and that, if the blind themselves are capable of independence and inter-dependence within society, society is capable of welcoming them.

Our own experience as individuals and as members of the National Federation of the Blind gives support at short range to what long range history already makes plain. We have observed and experienced the gradual breakdown of legal obstacles and prejudicial acts; we have participated in the expansion of opportunities for the blind and virtually every phase of social life and economic livelihood-in Federal, State and local civil service; in teaching and other professions; in the addition of a constructive element to public welfare. Let anyone who thinks social attitudes cannot be changed read this statement contained in a recent pamphlet of the Federal Civil Service Commission:

Sometimes a mistaken notion is held that . . . the blind can do work only where keenness of vision is not important in the job. The truth appears to be that the blind can do work demanding different degrees of keenness of vision on the part of the sighted. If there is any difference in job proficiency related to a degree of keenness of vision required for the sighted, it is this: the blind appear to work with greater proficiency at jobs where the element is present to a noticeable extent in the sighted job than where vision is only generally useful.

Second, are the blind mentally inferior, emotionally adolescent, and psychologically disturbed; or on the contrary, are they normal and capable of social and economic integration? The evidence that they are the latter can be drawn from many quarters: scientific, medical, historical, and theoretical. But the evidence which is most persuasive is that which I have already presented: it is the evidence displayed in the lives and performance of such average and ordinary blind men and women as those who attended our national Convention last Summer. It is the evidence of their vocational accomplishments, their personal achievements, the plain normality of their daily lives. To me their record is more than an impressive demonstration: it is a clinching rebuttal.

It would, of course, be a gross exaggeration to maintain that all blind persons have surmounted their physical disability and conquered their social handicap.

It is not the education of the sighted only which is needed to establish the right of the blind to equality and integration. Just as necessary is the education of the blind themselves. For the process of their rehabilitation is not ended with physical and vocational training; it is complete only when they have driven the last vestige of public stereotype of the blind from their own minds. In this sense, and to this extent only, is it true that the blind person must "adjust" to his handicap and to society. His adjustment need not--indeed must

not--mean his submission to all prevailing social norms and values. His goal is not conformity but autonomy: not acquiescence, but self-determination and self-control.

From all of this it should be clear that it is a long way yet from the blind alleys of dependency and segregation to the main thoroughfares of personal independence and social integration which we have set as our goal. And I believe it is equally plain that our progress toward that goal will demand the most forceful and skillful application of all the means at our command: that is, the means of education, persuasion, demonstration, and legislation.

We need the means of *education* to bring the public and the blind themselves to a true recognition of the nature of blindness--to tear away the fossil layers of mythology and prejudice. We need *persuasion* to induce employers to try us out and convince society to take us in. We need *demonstration* to prove our capacity and normality in every act of living and of making a living. And finally we need *legislation* to reform the statute books and obliterate the legal barriers which stand in the way of normal life and equal opportunity--replacing them with laws which accurately reflect the accumulated knowledge of modern science and the ethics of democratic society.

This final platform in our program of equality--the platform of adequate legislation--is in many respects the most crucial and pressing of all. For until the blind are guaranteed freedom of opportunity and endeavor within the law there can be little demonstration of their ability and little prospect of persuasion. What is needed is nothing less than a new spirit of the laws, which will uproot the discriminatory clauses and prejudicial assumptions that presently hinder the efforts of the blind toward self-advancement and self-support. The new philosophy requires that programs for the blind be founded upon the social conception of their normality and the social purpose of their reintegration into the community, with aids and services adjusted to these conceptions.

These then are the objectives of the self-organized blind; goals freely chosen for them by themselves. And this is the true significance of an organization of the blind, by the blind, for the blind. For the blind the age of charity, like that of chivalry, is dead; but this is not to say that there is no place for either of these virtues. In order to achieve the equality that is their right; in order to gain the opportunity that is their due, and in order to attain the position of full membership in the community that is their goal, the blind have continuing need for the understanding and sympathy and liberality of their sighted neighbors and fellow-citizens. But their overriding need is first of all for recognition-recognition of themselves as normal and of their purpose as legitimate. The greatest hope of the blind is that they may be seen as they *are*, not as they have been portrayed; and since they are neither wards nor children, their hope is to be not only seen but also heard--in their own accents and for whatever their cause may be worth.

* * * * *

DO WE DISRUPT STATE SERVICES?

A few months ago, at Denver, a neurotic, cantankerous former army officer, who had, unfortunately, been placed in charge of rehabilitation services to the blind in Colorado, is reported to have told a group of his colleagues that the presence of an NFB affiliate in any State will "set back work for the blind a quarter of a century." In the course of his brief term in office, this particular administrator had not only flouted, insulted, and thoroughly alienated the blind people of his State but had quarrelled incessantly with the members of his own staff--firing them one after another in rapid succession. The slightest questioning of any of his "orders" brought on a bellowing outburst of rage. He had himself recommended to Governor Johnson that the NFB make a survey in Colorado but when he found our organization could not be browbeaten into rubber-stamping all of his sometimes weird ideas, he became hysterically angry and turned loose upon us a flood of his best drill sergeant vituperation. His vindictiveness since that time has known no bounds.

Mr. Kline's phrase, "set back a State program for the blind a quarter of a century," has been picked up by other agency foes of the NFB, notably by Lon Alsup, in Texas. The charge is now being parroted by some of those opposing S-2411. It is being stated, sometimes explicitly and sometimes by implication, that organizations of the blind which are affiliated with the National Federation do nothing but criticize, hamper, and seek to sabotage their State rehabilitation programs and that there is almost universal conflict between the NFB affiliate and the State agency. It is said that, because of this, consultation between State agencies and the organized blind would "endanger" or even "destroy" State vocational rehabilitation services to the blind. Even many of the blind people whom I meet for the first time in the course of my field work have heard this so often that they have accepted it as fact and they are quite amazed to hear me deny it.

How can we get at the truth or falsity of this charge? The logical course would seem to be to go directly to the heads of the State agencies and put the question to *them*. This we have done and the replies are quoted in full below. Not all of those agency heads are now supporters of S-2411 but they have done their best to give an honest answer to a straightforward, unloaded question--"What has been the relationship between your State agency and the NFB affiliate in your State?" The replies quoted below are those which have been received prior to our deadline. There will be others later.

NEBRASKA

[Written to Mr. Jack Swager, President, NFB Nebraska affiliate.]

Lincoln, Nebraska
August 12, 1957

"Dear Mr. Swager:

I was somewhat amazed recently at a conversation that I heard and which I subsequently understand that you have heard, in which it was claimed that a number of organizations and agencies in the country are resisting the efforts of blind people to organize. I just can't quite understand why this should ever be done. I suppose probably that my lack of understanding is because of the very good relationships this agency has always had with the organized blind people of the State of Nebraska. As you well know, the cooperation between this agency and the Omaha Association of the Blind, as well as this agency and the other organizations for the blind in the State, namely, the Council of the Blind, the Lincoln Braille Club, and the Nebraska State Association of Workers for the Blind, as well as the parents of blind children has always been very, very, warm and cordial. Certainly this agency would not have been able to make the progress that it has without the help and assistance of all the organizations for and of, the blind in the State of Nebraska. I would dislike very much, the idea of having to try to develop a satisfactory program for the blind in the State of Nebraska without the very considerable help that I know I can depend upon getting from the organizations of the blind in the State.

Please be assured of this agency's willingness and intention of always and in every way possible, carrying out the thesis that we can progress in the interest of the blind only by close cooperation, and we certainly believe that when blind people organize together to help themselves, it certainly is helpful to any group or agency interested in the same ultimate goals.

Please express my best wishes to your membership of the Omaha Association of the Blind. I will look forward to visiting with you at one of your meetings sometime in September or October."

Most cordially yours,

(Signed) Harry L. Hines, Director
Services for the Blind

OREGON

Portland, Oregon
August 7, 1957

"Dear Doctor tenBroek:

I had the pleasure of attending the annual Convention of the American Association of Workers for the Blind in Chicago during the early part of July this year, and while at the Convention I had brought to my attention the matter of a bill which was introduced by the Honorable John F. Kennedy, Senator from Massachusetts in the United States Senate. Undoubtedly you are quite familiar with this bill, which is numbered S-2411 since it appears

your organization has taken an active part in getting this legislation enacted.

I must say I was somewhat appalled and very surprised to learn that such legislation as this has become necessary in this great democracy of ours, for to me the very fact that such a bill is introduced in the Senate of the United States would seem to indicate that somehow or other, our time-honored values and privileges as American citizens must have been trampled upon.

As you know, I have long believed in organizations of persons similarly affected by various circumstances of living or occupation so that they might better make known their needs and may better treat with matters which will affect them as a group. This, I believe, is a time tested and proven American way of life as is witnessed by the growth of our labor organizations, farmers' organizations, manufacturers' organizations, organizations of professional people, and last but far from least, organizations of the blind people of this great country.

It has been my privilege during the last fifteen years to become associated in various ways with organizations of blind people. As a seriously visually handicapped person, I felt it necessary that I affiliate myself with other blind individuals in order that we might together thresh out those problems common to all of us and in a better manner seek a solution to the difficulties with which we are confronted as well as to help to promote our cause among our sighted friends and fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, here in Oregon we have not had the benefit of a long-time, existing, efficiently working organization of the blind although there have been several organizations established but for various reasons or other, they have in most instances dwindled away in more or less social groups.

In my capacity as Administrator for the Oregon Commission for the Blind, I have always done whatever I could to assist *bona fide* groups of blind people to become organized into efficient responsible groups of blind persons to whom I could look as an Administrator for assistance in planning and effectuating a better program of services to the State's blind residents.

It is my sincere belief that efficient and well organized responsible groups of blind persons are a very essential factor in the development of better programs of services to blind people for I know of no other source from which I can find an answer as to just what the needs of blind people are, than blind people themselves, and I realize that to seek these answers from one or two selected blind persons would be an error for it is very likely that any collection of opinions from those few scattered blind people would only result in a conglomeration of conflicting opinions. On the other hand, if blind people have banded themselves together in responsible organization and if they have accepted the task of discussing their problems and arriving at mutually agreed upon solutions, I can then usually depend upon these people to offer to me as an Administrator competent and integrious advice and suggestions.

I would like to cite some specific examples which I have encountered in my official capacity as Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for some nine or ten years and also in my capacity as Administrator of the overall department of services for the blind. In one particular area; namely that of our vending stand program, I have found the organization of our blind Business Enterprise Managers has been most helpful to me in the preparation of needed rules and regulations and techniques of developing and operating our Business Enterprise program so as to be sure it will benefit the greatest number of blind people. This organization of blind business managers has, on frequent occasions, considered at some length problems which were of their mutual concern and certainly were of concern to the commission and myself in administering the program and they have often come up with suggestions which in turn have been taken before our Business Enterprise Advisory Committee which is composed of a group of sighted business, labor, and professional people and this Committee has then been able to consider these rather knotty problems with the benefit of the thought and reaction of the blind persons who would be most directly affected. In the end, the Business Enterprise Advisory Committee has then been able to advise the Commission of policy matters so that when the Commission has finally adopted a policy it has come about as a result of the concurrent thinking and agreement of all parties concerned; thus, the problem of administering the program of Business Enterprise here in Oregon has been greatly minimized. I am sure that this elimination of difficulty would not have been possible without the benefit of this organized group of blind Business Enterprise Managers.

In still another and more widely effective area, the benefit of an organization of the blind was exemplified during our recent legislative session which met here in Oregon, January through May of this year. At this legislative session the Commission had adopted the policy that it would introduce only legislation which was eminently necessary to improve the administration of the Department of Services for the Blind as it was set up then. We, therefore, asked the legislature to introduce at our request only those bills concerned with financing the department and one other bill which was concerned with making it possible for our shop workers to come under the benefits of the OASI Act. However, the Oregon Council of the Blind, through its legislative representative, developed four other bills which they referred to the Commission for the Blind prior to their being written up in form for presentation to the legislature. The Commission for the Blind, upon reviewing these bills, found itself to be in complete concurrence with the purposes of the bills. Therefore, the Commission directed me to inform the legislators who might ask for our reaction that it was in agreement with the bills. The Oregon Council of the Blind then undertook the responsibility of getting these bills introduced into the legislature by providing for the expense of their legislative representative to promote the passage of these bills by the legislature and to keep the various committees informed as to how the bills would affect the blind program here in the State of Oregon. I am delighted to say that the whole manner of carrying on this legislative program on the part of the Oregon Council of the Blind was most admirable and commanded the respect of all the legislators and I believe that the Commission itself was tremendously benefited by its stand. For, in effect, the Commission was actually saying that we stood ready and willing to administer whatever program of services the blind people of Oregon truly felt was necessary and the Commission

was further saying it was willing to let the blind people assume the responsibility for getting such legislation enacted and as long as the legislation was not contrary to what we as professional workers felt was to the best interests of the blind people of Oregon, the Commission would certainly support the blind organization in its efforts to improve our program.

The final results of this type of legislative program will, I am sure, be most beneficial to a great number of blind persons here in Oregon for not only did they win increased benefits for blind college students, but they also gained wider representation on the Commission and a law which permits the establishment of blind persons in vending stands in State, county and municipal buildings here in Oregon.

Certainly all of us must admit a considerable degree of indebtedness to the yeoman efforts of the organized blind of the State of Oregon for their effort in accomplishing the enactment of this legislation.

Last, but far from least, I would like to point out that not only did these blind people carry the ball in getting these three pieces of legislation enacted, but also they assisted materially in getting the legislation which the Commission was sponsoring enacted; and, I believe that their efforts contributed substantially to the success of the Commission in getting a suitable budget for the operation of the Department of Services for the Blind during the next biennium.

I am quite sure, Doctor tenBroek, that these examples of cooperative endeavor on the part of the State agency and the organized blind here in Oregon must certainly indicate that if we all work together to achieve a solution to the very difficult problems with which we are all faced, then we can most certainly expect greater successes and advancements in our efforts to serve the blind people of our State. I see no reason why such a program of cooperation cannot function in any other State as well as on a national level.

In conclusion, I wish to assure you that I would unalterably oppose any efforts that might be made to restrict the rights and privileges of blind people to organize and to participate in legislation and the development of the program which would purport to serve them for I feel that their participation and their acceptance of responsibility in building a program and its administration are especially essential if we are to really meet the needs of our blind fellow citizens. My only regret is that by some quirk of unfortunate circumstances, it has become necessary that we assure these Americans the same privileges they would have if they were sighted carpenters, doctors, lawyers, farmers, or manufacturers.

Please convey my best wishes to your wife and family and all of my other friends in the Bay area."

Sincerely yours,

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
(Signed) Clifford A. Stocker
Administrator

IOWA

Des Moines, Iowa
August 20, 1957

"To Whom It May Concern:

It is the intention of the Commission for the Blind to work for a mutually profitable working relationship between the Iowa Association for the Blind and other organizations and individuals interested in the blind in the State to the end that an expanded program of services may be offered to blind Iowa residents in need of and desirous of such services.

In expanding services to the blind in Iowa, the Commission recognizes the importance of coordinating the plans and activities of the organizations and individuals interested in the welfare of the blind in the State. In this connection the Commission welcomes the opportunity to share and exchange information with the Association concerning the needs of the blind in Iowa and services to be developed which will be beneficial to them. It is also the plan of the Commission to work with the Association in developing the service program and it will welcome the Association's consultation in planning and carrying out this program. The Commission recognizes the right of blind persons to organize and to promote the welfare of the blind in the State.

Prior to and during the past legislative sessions the Association gave valuable assistance and cooperated with other organizations and individuals in securing an increased appropriation so that services to the blind persons in the State could be expanded. The Commission looks forward to continued cooperation in this regard."

IOWA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

(Signed) Malcolm Jasper, Director

CALIFORNIA

Sacramento, California
August 8, 1957

"Dear Doctor tenBroek:

For some time now I have wanted to write you concerning the great values accruing to our Social Welfare programs for the blind as a direct result of the consultation we have received from the local and state-wide organizations of the blind. These organizations are all affiliated with the National Federation of the Blind.

During the past sixteen years, the State Division for the Blind has constantly sought, and received, counsel and recommendations from the California Council of the Blind with respect to proposed regulations to govern the administration of Aid to the Blind. We have also placed copies of the State's Manual of Policies and Procedures in the hands of many organizations of the blind and receive sound suggestions for changes from time to time.

The happy results of this consultation can be briefly summarized as follows: First, the State has received sound advice concerning the problems and needs of the blind thus enabling us to draft policies and procedures which are not only realistic but are also geared to helping blind persons in their efforts to decrease dependency. Second, the organizations of the blind have undertaken an interpretative program among their members with respect to the responsibilities, as well as the rights, of recipients of Aid to the Blind. This in turn has contributed greatly to a smooth functioning administration of the programs.

We in California have been particularly fortunate in that blind men and women have had their own organization for a great many years. Were this not so, we would certainly have sought to create some sort of an advisory committee, since the values derived from close consultation with the blind cannot be obtained from any other source.

We are greatly in the debt of the organizations of the blind in California for their rich contributions to the administration of this State's Social Welfare Program for the Blind and I would like the National Federation of the Blind to know this."

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Perry Sundquist, Chief
Division for the Blind

NORTH DAKOTA

[Written to Dr. Rudolph Bjornseth, President, NFB North Dakota affiliate.]

Grand Forks, North Dakota
August 19, 1957

“Dear Dr. Bjornseth:

This is in reply to your letter of August 14 requesting that I make statement as to the relationship between the North Dakota Association of the Blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

I am very happy to state that to my knowledge there has never been anything but the most cordial and cooperative relationship between the members of your association and the staff of Vocational Rehabilitation. We are always happy to be invited to participate in your annual Conventions and other activities which you sponsor. We have every reason to believe that this fine relationship will continue indefinitely in North Dakota.”

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Marie Kidder
State Director

KANSAS

[Written to Mrs. Esther Taylor, former President, NFB Kansas affiliate.]

Topeka, Kansas
August 16, 1957

“Appreciation:

On the occasion of your relinquishing your responsibilities as President of the Kansas Association for the Blind, I wish to formally extend the sincere appreciation of this agency and myself personally for the splendid cooperation displayed by yourself and the Association toward the Division of Services for the Blind. This spirit of cooperation which has existed between the Association and the Division was continued and strengthened during your period of office and will, I am sure, persist under your successors.

It is my feeling that we have reason to be very pleased with the excellent relationship which exists between our two organizations. This spirit of teamwork is most important, particularly because it contributes to progress in our efforts to improve the welfare of our

blind citizens which is our mutual goal. The close communication which exists between our two groups which results in free exchange of recommendations, interpretations, etc., should continue to be fostered and extended. This agency will continue to confer regularly with representatives of the Association, and seek your counsel and assistance. This you have given readily in the past with excellent results to the furtherance of the official program for the benefit of visually handicapped residents of our State.

I am pleased to inform you that our most recent cooperative effort which is along the line of a joint public education program is progressing most satisfactorily and although it is still in the planning stage gives promise of being fruitful. We will need to begin our joint planning soon for legislation to be presented to the 1958 session of the State legislature. The new "council" meeting will be in October and will bring together other agencies interested in the visually handicapped persons in addition to the Association and the Division. This group which was sponsored by both of our organizations may develop into a very valuable clearing house for problems with which we are concerned."

(Signed) Harry E. Haynes, Director
Services for the Blind

KENTUCKY

Frankfort, Kentucky
August 8, 1957

"To Whom It May Concern:

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, service for the blind section, is pleased to express appreciation for the good will and cooperation received from the organized blind of the State.

We recognize the activities of the Kentucky Federation of the Blind as a laudable example of the basic rights of all Americans to organize and give free expression of views pertaining to matters of common interest. We actively seek the constructive criticism of the Federation and look forward to the continuing cooperation in our future efforts to bring about economic independence to the blind of this State."

(Signed) T. V. Cranmer, Supervisor
Services for the Blind

WISCONSIN

Madison, Wisconsin
August 14, 1957

"To Whom It May Concern:

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind has indicated a desire to secure a statement concerning the relationship of that organization and its members to the State agency serving the blind.

In accordance with the provisions of the Wisconsin Statutes there is created a Statutory Advisory Committee of the Blind to act as an advisory committee to the Board of Public Welfare. They are appointed by the Board of Public Welfare for a six-year term. Such appointments are made on the basis of recognized interest in and a demonstrated knowledge of the problems of the visually handicapped. In developing our programs of Services to the Blind this Department has made constructive use of the Statutory Advisory Committee, since the membership of this committee represents a cross section of the blind of this State. In addition there are occasions when the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and its affiliated organizations do express themselves with respect to program activities. It has been the policy of the Department through its Division of Public Assistance to take every opportunity to cooperate with and discuss the services to the blind programs with such representative organizations. Suggestions from these interested groups are considered by the department in program planning. Decisions and conclusions are matters of departmental determination.

In keeping with the Department's attitude for continued improvement in our Services to the Blind program we have had fine cooperation from both the Council and the Statutory Advisory Committee of the Blind."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Thomas J. Lucas, Director
Division of Public Assistance

SOUTH DAKOTA

Pierre, South Dakota
August 28, 1957

"Dear Dr. tenBroek:

In response to a request from the South Dakota Association for the Blind, I wish to

submit the following statement of policy with regard to the organization of blind persons in this State.

The South Dakota Service to the Blind maintains a policy of encouraging membership in the South Dakota Association for the Blind so that they may continue their work to improve the welfare of blind persons in the State. The majority of the Association's members are blind but there are also a number of sighted members, who are interested in the common field of endeavor. The Association and the State Department have always worked together in achieving goals which would benefit the blind population of South Dakota. During the five years I have administered services from this department, I have found the South Dakota Association for the Blind to have rendered valuable services directly to the blind people and to have rendered equally as valuable a service with their counsel with us in developing a total program of rehabilitation and allied services to the blind of the State."

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)Howard H. Hanson, Director
Service to the Blind

OHIO

[Written to Mr. Clyde Ross, President, NFB Ohio affiliate.]

Columbus, Ohio
August 12, 1957

"Dear Mr. Ross:

Your letter of August 8th just reached us today, August 12th and we have attempted all day to reach you on the phone but we have been unsuccessful. The purpose of our call was to convey the following information in time for your meeting scheduled for tonight. We regret that we were unable to reach you.

In reply to the relationship of the Ohio Council of the Blind and the Ohio Department of Welfare, we should like to say that this relationship has been one of cooperation and understanding.

We are fully in accord with your motto 'Help those who seek to help themselves'. This emphasis on rehabilitation is the keynote of the policy of this administration and it is our hope that we will be able to improve and strengthen our program of services for the blind. We want you to know that we appreciate the counsel and advice of your organization in achieving our goal."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Richard C. Minor
Assistant Director

NEVADA

[Statement by Mrs. Barbara Coughlan, Director, State Department of Public Welfare--Nevada.]

"As an administrator I have found the Nevada Federation of the Blind a valued source of assistance in administering services for the blind. Its activities have been a key factor in the growth and improvement of our programs during the past few years.

The adoption of the aid to the blind program by the Nevada legislature in 1953 was due largely to the efforts of the Federation. This program financed by the Federal and State governments, replaced the State-county financed Blind Pensions which had been established in 1925. The new program provided far more adequate assistance to over twice as many blind persons as had been helped formerly.

From the first, the Federation has provided helpful counsel and advice to the Department. One means has been through its representation on the State Aid to the Blind Advisory Committee. This Committee has assisted in recommending policy and legislation as well as in interpreting the program to the public and, in turn, reporting to the Department community reaction to the program. With regard to the latter, the Department has enjoyed the benefit of having available the defined position of the organized blind in relation to programs administered on their behalf. As an administrator I would be handicapped seriously if there were not such an organized group. I feel it is of the utmost importance to know how the blind persons served feel about the services provided and how such services can be improved. The Federation of the Blind has been an excellent vehicle for this purpose. Our relationship has been one of mutual confidence and respect.

Last year Governor Charles H. Russell asked the National Federation of the Blind to study all programs for the blind in Nevada and make recommendations for their improvement, as well as evaluation of their current functioning. A three-man team from the Executive Board of the Federation came to Nevada and stayed several weeks. They read departmental records, studied our case files, interviewed staff, traveled all over the State to talk with individual blind persons, and met with Lions Club members and parents of blind children. The report of the survey made by the Federation contained a number of legislative recommendations, all of which were enacted at the last session of the legislature. The minimum amount of need, as provided by law, for each eligible individual was increased from seventy-five dollars to ninety dollars a month. The Federation's study also pointed out that Nevada was the only Western State without home teaching service for the blind. As a

result the position of Fieldworker was established by law to assist 'blind persons in achieving physical and psychological orientation' and 'social and economic independence.' The enactment of such legislation is to be attributed, in my opinion, to the fact that almost the entire membership of the Nevada Federation took an active and personal part in the effort, in one way or another.

It has been my privilege to be invited to attend local, State and national meetings of the Federation. I also have had many informal discussions with officers and members of the group. I have found these opportunities invaluable for the purpose of working together on problems of joint concern in order to achieve our common goal--improved services for the blind."

Our Position. Wherever an agency, private or public, is making a sincere and effective effort to render needed services to the blind, the National Federation and all of its State affiliates are only too happy to cooperate in every way possible. Under other circumstances, however, we do not hesitate to voice our criticisms. We believe these criticisms are almost invariably constructive. In an increasing number of States we now have statutory advisory committees, composed of blind citizens selected on the basis of demonstrated interest in, and knowledge of the problems of the blind. These committees are proving to be an effective liaison between State agencies and the organized blind, interpreting to each the viewpoint of the other.

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BVA OPPOSES KENNEDY BILL

At its twelfth annual convention, held in Hartford, Connecticut, August 24, the Blinded Veterans of America unanimously adopted a resolution opposing S-2411 and H.R. 8609 on the grounds that these measures were unnecessary and might be harmful. No one was present at this convention to present the NFB point of view. Members of this veterans' group, (who actually know almost nothing of the problems which the civilian blind face), acted docilely in accordance with what they were told. As Dr. tenBroek pointed out so cogently in the August *Braille Monitor*, the fact that the U. S. Constitution provides for the right of free speech, assembly and petition, does not make these rights self-executing or automatically effective. It has been found necessary to enact special statutes in order to effectuate every single provision in our Constitution and the right of the blind to act independently through their own organizations, free from official pressure, is no exception.

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STAFF APPOINTMENTS

On August 24, Mr. A. L. Archibald submitted his resignation as the Washington, D. C. representative of the National Federation of the Blind. Dr. tenBroek replied in part as follows: "Dear Archie: May I acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 24, asking to be relieved of your duties as a member of the staff of the National Federation of the Blind. I accept your resignation with the greatest regret. As you know, I have the highest regard for your ability and the highest admiration for your many years of devoted efforts in the improvement of the lot of the blind in this nation."

The Washington, D. C. office of the NFB is now in charge of Mr. John Taylor, formerly of Nashville, Tennessee, and Mr. Earl Scharry, formerly of Dubuque, Iowa. In accordance with a long-established policy which does not permit any officer or member of the Board of Directors to receive any form of compensation, both appointees have resigned from the Board. Mr. Scharry had been a member of the NFB Board of Directors since 1954 and Mr. Taylor since 1956.

John Taylor, thirty-three, is a graduate of the Tennessee School for the Blind, received his Bachelor's degree at Tennessee Polytechnic Institute and his Master's at the George Peabody College at Nashville. He has done additional graduate work at San Francisco College and at Peabody. For the past five years he has taught at the Tennessee School for the Blind and during that period he has been an active member of the NFB Speakers' Bureau. He was also a member of the NFB Nevada Survey Team, which turned in such an excellent report that the Governor of that State praised it highly in a special press release. John is an exceedingly personable young man and is expected to do extremely well in direct contact work with members of Congress and with government officials.

Earl Scharry, forty-nine, received his B.A. from the University of Dubuque in 1932 and a law degree from the University of Iowa in 1935. He has engaged in private practice and in business. He has a wife and four children, who are remaining in Dubuque for the present. His legal training and his keenly analytical mind will be of great use to him and to the Federation in his new role.

The latest addition to the staff is Mr. Paul Kirton, twenty-five of Dallas, Texas. He graduated from the Texas School for the Blind in 1951, earned his Bachelor's degree at the University of Texas and then went on to graduate in the law school of that University in 1956. He has practiced his profession for the past year in Dallas and has been very active in the Lone Star State Federation of the Blind. He has a bride of only a few months and at this writing they are both in Madison, Wisconsin, where they plan to remain for a time. Paul has been assigned to work with me for perhaps the next year, learning the intricacies of White Cane Week, the greeting card program and fund-raising in general. He will also accompany me on organizing trips.

All three are totally blind. Their exact titles have not yet been designated but they will be prepared to perform any and all functions necessary for the furthering of the Federation

program.

The addition of this personnel represents a long overdue expansion of the NFB staff. Only the uncertainty of Federation income has delayed it so long.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS

The NFB Executive Committee met at the Maryland Hotel in Chicago on September 7 to consider proposals, advanced by two of its members, which would have had the effect of transferring to this Committee a number of the functions heretofore exercised by the NFB President. After a thorough discussion, these proposals were rejected by an overwhelming majority. It was pointed out that a committee whose members are scattered over a 3,000-mile area can not possibly handle the day-to-day emergencies which constantly arise with any real degree of efficiency or effectiveness. A resolution was adopted which restated and clarified our traditional way of doing things—the annual convention is the supreme authority in setting policies, the Executive Committee makes policies *between* Conventions, but the implementation of all policies remains in the hands of the president. This resolution also restated the policy first adopted at Des Moines, in 1942, and again at Omaha, in 1955—namely, that the President is empowered to hire, supervise and, if necessary, dismiss members of the staff and other employees, and that the number and compensation of staff members and other employees is a matter for his judgment. This resolution was adopted by a vote of nine ayes, there being two abstentions. In the course of the debate a number of Committee members made it abundantly clear that they felt the President had done a superb job for the NFB and they could see no reason for tying his hands and hampering his effectiveness by the imposition of cumbersome and time-wasting restrictions. It was also pointed out that a meeting of the Executive Committee at a time other than in connection with a National Convention, costs in the neighborhood of \$2,000 and that this amount could be used to much greater advantage in other ways.

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NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

The annual national Convention of the NFB determines policy, much in the manner of a New England town meeting. This is democracy in its purest form. Policy determinations are embodied in resolutions and for the benefit of the thousands of interested members who can not attend national Conventions it seems appropriate that several of these resolutions should appear in each issue of *The Braille Monitor*. Here are three of them:

Better Business Bureaus, Resolution 57-08. Whereas, certain Better Business Bureau offices, notably in St. Louis, Missouri, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Memphis, Tennessee, Los Angeles, California, Denver, Colorado, and Rochester, New York, have attacked the National Federation of the Blind and its sales of greeting cards by issuing false and

irresponsible statements utterly misrepresenting and distorting facts about this organization and its sales of greeting cards; and whereas, the National Federation of the Blind is known and has been known to Better Business Bureaus for at least the past ten years, and has in the past provided Better Business Bureaus with information with respect to its activities so that the files of the Better Business Bureau should and we believe do show the National Federation of the Blind to be a federation of organizations of the blind in every part of the country and in nearly every State; and Whereas, the leaders of the National Federation of the Blind are persons well known for their integrity and whose reputations are readily ascertainable by Better Business Bureaus and must therefore be known to them; and Whereas, the good repute of the business enterprise with which the National Federation has contracted for the sale of greeting cards is known and fully ascertainable inasmuch as this business enterprise has been engaged in the business of selling greeting cards longer than a decade and has undertaken the mailing of greeting cards for well established and nationally known charitable organizations; and Whereas, statements without justification in principle or foundation in fact have been released to the public and to various news media by Better Business Bureaus asserting that the National Federation of the Blind is a "phony" organization, that the business enterprise with which the National Federation contracts for the sale of greeting cards is composed of "profiteers" and "racketeers", and that the officers of the National Federation are selling greeting cards for their private gain; and Whereas, all such statements are patently false and grossly unfair, and appear to be uttered out of willful ignorance or made with a deliberate design to damage the National Federation's fundraising efforts and to create in the mind of the public a prejudice against the sale of National Federation of the Blind greeting cards in the mail; and Whereas, the irresponsible manner and calculated purpose of such statements as well as the callous disregard on the part of the Better Business Bureaus of information available to them discredits altogether the reliability of the Better Business Bureaus as dispensers of information on the business ethics and moral standards of organizations engaged in fundraising activities:

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the National Federation of the Blind in Convention assembled at New Orleans, Louisiana, this 7th day of July, 1957, that, this Convention condemns as unconscionable and reprehensible the aforementioned Better Business Bureau actions designed to disrupt and prevent the sale of greeting cards by the National Federation and this Convention urges and recommends to the officers and directors of the National Federation of the Blind that extreme caution be exercised in dealing with, or providing information to Better Business Bureau offices so long as there are Better Business Bureaus which persist in willful misrepresentations intended to prejudice the prosperity and success of the sale of greeting cards by the National Federation of the Blind; and Be It Further Resolved that the President of the National Federation of the Blind is instructed to forward a copy of this resolution to the national office of the Better Business Bureau.

Presidential Study Commission, Resolution 57-02. Whereas, upon the recommendation of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare has submitted to the Congress a proposal for the establishment of a twenty-one

member Presidential Study Commission on problems of the blind; and Whereas, S. 2385 and H.R. 8427 have been introduced into the Senate and House of Representatives respectively by Senator Alexander Smith and Congressman Stuyvesant Wainright at the request of Secretary Marion B. Folsom; and Whereas, these bills fail to provide specifically for representation upon the Study Commission for organizations composed of and speaking for the blind themselves, although the President is requested to make appointments from among "leaders in medicine, social work, psychology, rehabilitation and related professions, representatives of public and voluntary organizations or agencies providing services to blind Persons. . ." and Whereas, the work of the Commission will actually be conducted by a staff selected by the Commission inasmuch as Commission members themselves will serve only part-time and authorization is given to draw staff members from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and from among other professional workers for the blind; and Whereas, both the composition of the proposed Commission and the stated scope of the Commission's activities make it clearly evident that the study to be made will not be carried out with any genuine independence from influence by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and other agencies presently conducting programs for the blind, and cannot, therefore, result in a fair and impartial survey and evaluation of existing programs and the directions in which they tend; and Whereas, these bills fail utterly to recognize or make accommodation to the most significant reality today in the area of programming for the blind and evaluating the needs and problems of the blind; namely, the pervasive fact that the vital social and economic interests of the blind people of the nation do not coincide with, and in truth, differ sharply in many respects from the vested interests of professional workers for the blind in the perpetuation of outmoded practices and concepts relating to the social and economic role the blind can play; and Whereas, a Study Commission so composed and so limited in the scope of its endeavors can scarcely produce at this time a genuinely useful review of programs for the blind, but instead, is more likely to buttress with Presidential authority the repugnant attitudes of paternalism and custodialism which are now prevalent among professional workers for the blind and which in large measure characterize existing programs conducted by public and private agencies for the blind;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the National Federation of the Blind, etc., . . . That this Convention urgently recommends to the United States Congress that S. 2385 and H.R. 8427 be drastically revised before enactment to accomplish the following purposes: (1) To provide for a balance of the contending interests in the area of work for the blind today by granting equal representation upon the Study Commission, etc. (a) the public (b) organizations of the blind themselves (c) organizations composed of professional workers for the blind; and (2) To provide for a Commission composed of fewer than twenty-one members which will be able itself to conduct the work of the Commission; and (3) To provide for a staff to assist the Commission which will be entirely independent of existing programs for the blind in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and in State and private agencies expending Federal funds for aid to the blind or services to the blind; and (4) To provide for subpoena powers sufficient to enable the Commission to assemble all relevant data from agencies expending Federal funds and to require testimony from any person employed by an agency or organization receiving benefits from Federal funds in order to carry out a program for the blind; and (5) To provide that the proceedings of the

Commission in their entirety shall be a public record revealing all facts brought to the attention of the Commission and expressing the views and evaluations of all persons and groups interested in matters relating to the blind.

Exempt Income, Resolution 57-09. Whereas, H.R. 8131, now pending in Congress proposes that all blind recipients of public assistance be given incentive by granting them increased exemptions of earned income up to \$1000 per year, and that incentive to gain complete economic independence be retained by gradually reducing aid payments to them through the device of taking into consideration only fifty percent of each earned dollar above \$1000 per year; and Whereas, the bill provides that every aid to the blind recipient shall be entitled to possess at least the assessed valuation of \$3000 in real and personal property; and additional possessions of real and personal property may be approved for individuals whose individual plans for attaining self-support may require their use; and Whereas, further implementing the self-support purpose, the bill prohibits any public assistance agency from requiring blind recipients to subject their property to liens or to transfer title to their property to these agencies as a condition of receiving aid; and Whereas, the bill also requires that the ability of relatives to contribute to the support of recipients be entirely disregarded in determining eligibility; and Whereas, H.R. 8131 further provides for equal minimum payments to all eligible blind individuals in any State; and Whereas, to provide more adequate assistance payments to the blind, H.R. 8131 raises from sixty dollars to seventy-five dollars the matching ceiling on Federal financial participation, and provides that the Federal Government will pay six-sevenths of the first thirty-five dollars of average monthly payments to recipients instead of four-fifths of the first thirty dollars paid on the average as provided in current law; and Whereas, adoption of the amendments proposed in H.R. 8131 would not only provide more adequate relief from the distress of poverty among needy blind persons, but would also mean that the rehabilitation approach would be placed at the core of the nation's public assistance program for the blind; Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the National Federation of the Blind, etc., . . . That this Convention declares and directs that it shall be the policy of the National Federation of the Blind to give wholehearted support to all of the provisions of H.R. 8131, and the officers and directors of the National Federation of the Blind are instructed to do all things possible to obtain approval from the Congress for the badly needed revisions of title X which are set forth in H.R. 8131; and Further Be It Resolved That this Convention express to Cecil R. King of California the deep appreciation of all the organizations affiliated in the National Federation of the Blind for his continued efforts to secure enlightened improvements in public welfare programs for the blind.

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BILLS DOUBLETALK? OR JUST BAD ARITHMETIC?

The Kennedy Bill (S. 2411) contains 202 words. The AAWB resolution attacking the Kennedy Bill contains 619 words. The August issue of the *Braille Mirror*, a monthly

published by the Braille Institute of America, contains the AAWB resolution in full, with the following amazing introductory note: "The above named bill, now pending in Congress, is entirely too voluminous to reprint in full, and to delete any portion of it seems ill advised. Suffice it to say, therefore, that after due deliberation by the Resolutions Committee of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, Inc. at its 1957 convention in Chicago, the following resolution was passed by its members on July 12, 1957. No doubt your Congressman can send you a copy of the bill if requested."

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ANOTHER PROGRESS REPORT

Interest in the technical and mechanical aspects of Braille production, which has been growing since the end of World War II, culminated in 1954 with the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress requesting the American Printing House to undertake, on a contract basis, a program of research in cooperation with the other leading Braille presses of the U. S. A recent issue of the *International Journal for the Education of the Blind*, (organ of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind), contains an intensely interesting progress report on this research. The following brief excerpt will indicate the nature and potential importance of the work being done:

"B. The construction of a pilot model automatic embossing or stereograph machine for the production of plates for use in the printing of Braille. (This proposal included the adaptation of a commercially available IBM tape-punching device to a Braillewriter so that a transcriber would, in the process of transcribing from inkprint into Braille, record this information on punched tape. A stereograph machine would then be fitted with a tape-sensing device so as to be controlled by such punched tape.)

"C. The development of an automatically operated interpointing Braillewriter, (to be undertaken only when and if the automatic stereograph machine described above proved practicable.)

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THE HELPLESS BLIND

Milton Oles, electronic engineer specializing in sound amplification installations, had been the biggest "sound man" between Chicago and Minneapolis. He had handled the installation for the National Plowing Contest in Minnesota in 1952, where 500,000 people were enabled to hear the voices of Adlai Stevenson and General Eisenhower. Then, as the result of a dangerous operation to remove shrapnel, his sight was a thing of the past. He remained in a hospital for two and a half years. When he was at last released his doctors counselled him to dispose of his equipment for whatever it would bring and to pick out a comfortable rocking chair. His sighted friends agreed that this was all that was left for Milt to do. But there happen to be a number of successful, well-adjusted and highly intelligent

blind people in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Milt got in touch with them. They told him the advice he had received was nonsense. This was a year ago and now Milt is back in the groove, steadily rebuilding his business. The management of the La Crosse city auditorium had scheduled a concert by the Fred Waring organization, which insisted on having no less than ten microphones installed on the stage. Two electronic engineers were called in from Minneapolis. They told the management it was physically impossible to install more than three. Waring threatened to cancel. In desperation they called in Milt, whose services they had formerly rejected because of his blindness. Milt quickly demonstrated just how it could be done. Then they tried to get rid of him but the Stage-Hands Union came to his rescue and insisted he be given the job. This publicity led to many other such jobs. He is now installing a disaster warning system on the top of Granddad's Bluff, which overlooks the city, and from which Milt says the entire population of the city, (some 50,000), will be able to hear distinctly every word of any announcement that may be made. Milt has a driver but he does all the work himself--crawling about on dizzy catwalks and rafters and soldering as he goes. Yesterday he joined the Wisconsin NFB affiliate.

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From the *Free Press*, (Wisconsin): "A double-bitted axe, in the hands of an expert, is a precision instrument. Proof of that is provided by Fred Robinson, a skilled and experienced woodsman in the pine forests that surround his farm near Moscow, Idaho. His axe bites clean and hard and his trees fall straight and true. Watching him at work, you find it difficult to believe that he is totally blind."

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1957 TENNESSEE CONVENTION

by
John Taylor

The following is a summary of the 1957 annual convention of the Tennessee Federation of the Blind held in the King Cotton Hotel in Memphis August 31 and September 1. Program items included a welcome by the Mayor of Memphis, Edmund Orgill; a panel discussion on the education of blind children; an address on the nursery school training of blind children, and an address concerning low vision optical aids which was followed by an optical aids clinic. A high point of the Saturday afternoon program was an hour-long discussion led by Dr. tenBroek which dealt with the right to organize and questions from the floor. The annual banquet on Saturday evening was attended by more than one hundred members and guests and featured a brief address by Mr. Henry Loeb, enlightened Memphis Commissioner of Public Works, who has in the last two years been primarily responsible for placing fourteen blind persons as vending stand operators, Braille switchboard operators, etc. The major address of the evening (an eloquent presentation of "A Preference for Equality") was delivered by Dr. tenBroek. The final event of the banquet occurred when Hollis Liggett was awarded a Braille watch as the outstanding blind person of the year in Tennessee. During the Sunday afternoon session, the following officers were

elected: president, Mark Thrower, Chattanooga; first vice president, Johnson Bradshaw, Nashville; second vice-president, J. M. Warren, Nashville, third vice-president, Laverne Humphrey, Knoxville; secretary, Gertie Wisdom, Nashville; treasurer, Willette Marshall, Nashville. The 1958 NFB Convention delegate is Gertie Wisdom and the alternate is Tommy Cox.

The convention unanimously adopted the following legislative program: (1) An enlightened public assistance law modeled after the Nevada Act. (2) An effective State use law for blind made products. (3) Enactment of a bill to give preference to blind persons applying for positions in agencies serving the blind. (4) Enactment of a statutory advisory committee with representatives of the organized blind to work with administrators of programs for the blind. (5) Support of S. 2411 and H.R. 8609 concerning the right to organize....

The convention unanimously adopted the following motions: (1) A motion instructing the treasurer to forward a check in the amount of two hundred dollars to support *The Braille Monitor*. (2) A motion to instruct the treasurer to forward a check in the amount of two hundred dollars to the NFB Endowment Fund. (3) Nashville, Tennessee was selected as the 1958 convention city.

Everyone agreed that the 1957 convention was our biggest and best convention yet. Radio and news publicity was excellent and we received long-distance phone calls from newspapers over the State inquiring about program activities and the newly elected officers.

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HERE AND THERE

From the *Indiana Council Newsletter*: "Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wilson, of Terre Haute, passed away just recently. They were both staunch supporters and workers for the Indiana Council."

From the *Florida White Cane*: The Florida legislature increased the maximum grant from sixty dollars to sixty-six dollars a month and provided, in addition, that the welfare department shall distribute any surplus funds to welfare recipients. This last is a significant breakthrough. All lien bills were killed. The Tallahassee chapter reports an average return of sixty-eight cents on every White Cane Week letter sent out this year. This is really phenomenal. The finance committee of the Miami Lighthouse is reported to have unanimously recommended an increase in shop wages to one dollar an hour.

Writing editorially in the *Oklahoma Viewpoint*, Durward McDaniel describes a so-called "Governor's Committee for the Blind," the purpose of which was to survey programs for the blind in Oklahoma and to recommend legislation to improve those programs. This Committee met several times in 1956 but it soon became apparent that its members had neither the time nor the technical skill to make such a survey. Our Oklahoma affiliate then

offered to put up \$1,000 so that an expert, not connected with any agency, could be engaged. The Committee took no action on this offer and simply stopped meeting. The net result of all this was that the Oklahoma Federation refrained from making an effective legislative effort last winter because of its sincere desire to give the "Governor's Committee for the Blind" a clear field. It has been a disillusioning experience and may very possibly foreshadow what could happen at the national level if the agency supported bill to establish a "President's Committee" should be enacted. In other words, all Federal legislation for the benefit of the blind might be held up several years while the agencies which would dominate such a "President's Committee" went through the motions of investigating themselves.

From the *Arizona White Cane Journal*: As a part of a safety campaign among its own employees, the telephone company in Phoenix hired two blind persons to Braille one thousand cards with the slogan: "You can walk with a wooden leg. You can chew with false teeth. But you cannot see with a glass eye." This was so arranged that the print statements could be put above each corresponding Braille line.

From the same source, "The sins of the welfare department in this State are those of omission rather than commission. It has fiddled for years while the blind have burned with indignation. In many cases highly intelligent, capable blind people having come to Arizona that they or members of their families might benefit by our climate, have been forced to return to their home States because of the total failure of this State in placing the blind in remunerative jobs. The organized blind of Arizona have year after year become increasingly weary of this situation and while at the Convention, the members of the Arizona delegation conferred with leaders of the NFB regarding legislation which will remedy this unfortunate stalemate. They have returned with an enthusiastic promise of assistance and support from the NFB."

And again, (referring to the Editor's first experience at a national Convention), "To say that Dr. tenBroek is a dynamic leader of the blind would be a new low in understatement. With his flashing humor, inspiring personality and incisive mind, he is in truth a veritable dynamo, and . . . he constitutes a powerhouse whose energy is being felt throughout the nation. Wherever the influence of the NFB reaches, blind people are inspired to work in their own behalf to improve conditions for themselves and future generations of the blind."

And again, "A reward was offered in the April issue of the *White Cane Journal* for information on the identity of a blind man who had been reportedly trained and placed in a local plant. . . . The 1956 report of the County Welfare Department stated that a blind man with six children receiving one hundred seventy-three dollars a month assistance had been trained in a phase of aircraft work and placed in a local plant. Some of the blind and other interested people in Tucson made inquiries in an attempt to trace this individual. Perhaps the reward should rightfully go to the welfare department since it is from them that information has been obtained, although it was not voluntarily or cheerfully given. It was explained to the president of the State association that the case cited in the report was not an actual case, but one made up from several other cases to show what the welfare department hopes to do."

We are greatly pleased to note that Agnes Zachte, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has apparently decided to go on editing the *Visually Handicapped Views*, which has been so valuable to the blind people of her State. The current issue announces the opening of a new district office of the Service to the Blind at 109 W. 8th Street, Sioux Falls. Mr. Arnold Auch will be in charge.

At a meeting of the board of directors of the Georgia Federation of the Blind, held in Bainbridge on August 17, an Atlanta chapter, under the presidency of Otis L. Booth, 578 Teakwood Drive, N.W., Atlanta, was granted a charter. Later in the day a Bainbridge chapter also came into existence and was likewise admitted to the GFB. Its president is Elmer Bates, of Bainbridge. The board voted to re-introduce a number of measures into the next session of the State legislature and created a committee to investigate various ways of raising money for the State organization.

Clyde Ross and A. L. Archibald attended the third annual convention of the West Virginia Federation of the Blind at Charleston, August 17-19, and both spoke. Chris Cerone, of Wheeling, was re-elected president and C. C. White, of Huntington, became vice-president. Clyde writes: "There were eighty-eight present at the banquet, including the new Director of Public Assistance, the Stand Supervisor and the Rehab representative for the southern half of the State. The latter is a young blind man. He has been with the State of West Virginia seven months; has joined the Charleston chapter of the WVFB, and has already gained acceptance among the blind. . . The new Director of Public Assistance praised the WVFB and said that he needed their help to make his program effective. Their Stand Supervisor is popular with the operators."

We are all elated over an announcement, just made by the Governor of Oregon, of the appointment to the Oregon Commission for the Blind of Mr. Stanhope Pier, active blind member of our Oregon affiliate and energetic chairman of its legislative committee.

A recent issue of the *Minnesota Bulletin* carries an account of notable gains achieved by the organized blind vending stand operators of that State. It also contains an announcement of the re-election of Mrs. Eleanor Harrison as president of the Minnesota Organization of the Blind, which took place at the Memorial Day week-and semi-annual convention.

Beginning with the next month's issue, the table of contents for this magazine will appear on the *last* page.

A seminar sponsored by the Illinois Federation of the Blind was held in Chicago the third week in August. It is reported to have been highly successful. Durward McDaniel was one of the featured speakers. A similar State seminar, sponsored by the New Mexico Federation of the Blind, was conducted during the Labor Day week-end near Santa Fe. A number of NFB leaders were present, including Durward McDaniel, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Paul Kirton of Dallas, Texas; and Allen Jenkins, of Oakland, California. About one hundred attended the New Mexico seminar.

Because so much NFB material is now available on tapes which can be purchased or borrowed from the national office, we have been urging local organizations to purchase tape recorders so that this material can be played at local meetings and State conventions. That great friend of the National Federation, Mr. Hubert E. Smith, president, Ways and Means for the Blind and the Walter G. Holmes Foundation, 334 Masonic Building, Augusta, Georgia, has offered to help any NFB organization obtain tape recorders at manufacturers' prices. If interested, write to him.

S. 2434 has now been signed by the President and is of considerable importance to the blind. It removes the ceiling on appropriations for talking book records, talking book reproducers, and books printed in raised characters. The enactment of this amendment should eventually reduce the present shortage of talking books reproducers and make additional funds available for Braille and talking book materials, resulting in a substantial increase in reading matter for the nation's more than 60,000 blind readers.

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